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Inventor(s): **A.W. Huang et al.**
For: **SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR CLASSIFYING ELECTRONICALLY POSTED DOCUMENTS**

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Enclosed with the Patent Application are:

1. 6 sheet(s) of drawing(s)
2. A Declaration and Power of Attorney
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SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR CLASSIFYING ELECTRONICALLY POSTED DOCUMENTS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

This invention relates generally to systems and methods for comparing and classifying documents, and in particular to systems and methods for classifying electronically posted documents used in conjunction with search engines.

2. Description of the Related Art

The Internet, a global network connecting millions of computers, is increasingly becoming the preferred way to disseminate information. An estimated 150 million people worldwide use the Internet to access and exchange information.

Both commercial and non-commercial entities have recognized the growing use of the Internet and have thus accelerated the posting of "electronic documents" to provide access to their information. As known, "electronically posted documents" ("documents," herein) may contain any type of information which can be electronically communicated. These documents, typically web pages, are posted on the world wide web, a system of internet-accessible web servers. Individual companies set up one or more web sites using a web server to support web page publication and communication. Some examples of information which can be included in an electronic document such as a web page includes data, text, facsimile, audio, video, graphics, as well as other types of information.

In many instances, the user may not know the web site location (URL address) which contains the desired information. Alternatively, the user may prefer to browse similar information obtained from a variety of different web sites. In these cases, the user may employ a search engine to locate one or more web pages containing information about the desired topic.

Conventional search engines, such as Yahoo®, Alta Vista® and Excite® use several programs to retrieve web pages containing the requested information. Typically, a "spider" or "webcrawler" program is used to locate and download posted documents. Once downloaded, an "indexer"

program reads the documents and creates an index based on the words contained in each document. Upon entry of one or more of the indexed keywords, the search engine provides to the requester a listing of the search results, typically in the form of HTML links, each listing corresponding to one of the indexed documents. The user may then click on one of the displayed HTML links to access information on a particular web page. Each provider's search engine typically uses proprietary webcrawler and indexing programs which locate and return the most comprehensive set of documents in the shortest amount of time.

A problem associated with the aforementioned process is the listing of duplicate documents in the search results. Duplications inconvenience the user by directing him/her to seemingly distinct documents which, in fact, contain identical content.

To minimize the occurrence of duplicate listings, a textual comparison process was developed by which the text content of two downloaded or listed documents is compared. If the text of the two documents match, the documents are deemed duplicative and one could then be discarded without loss of information.

One disadvantage of the conventional textual comparison process is that it performs a pair-wise document comparison process on a non-selective basis. For example, the conventional textual comparison process will compare documents of different mime-types which are inherently dissimilar. Performing these unnecessary document comparisons lengthen the system's response time. Another disadvantage of the conventional process is that it does not ensure elimination of content-duplicate listings. Documents which contain identical content but which include different attributes (such as metadata "href" elements), are typically identified as different documents using the conventional textual comparison process. These documents in fact are content-identical and provide no additional information to the searcher.

In view of the disadvantages suffered by the conventional system and process, a new system and method for classifying posted documents is needed.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides new systems and methods for efficiently classifying electronically posted documents. The classification process employs a multi-tiered comparison process in which portions of corresponding metadata summaries are compared at the structural,

attribute, and text level. This comparison process provides a fast and accurate means of determining if two posted documents are duplicative or distinct.

In one embodiment of the invention, a method for classifying posted documents is presented which includes the processes of receiving two posted documents and generating corresponding metadata summaries for each, wherein each of the metadata summaries includes at least one sub-tree structure. The structures of the two summary sub-trees within the respective metadata summaries are subsequently compared. If the two summary sub-trees are different, the two documents are deemed distinct.

In another embodiment of the invention, a system for classifying posted documents is presented. The system includes a metadata parser module, a summary repository, and a summary consolidator. The metadata parser module receives electronically posted documents and in response outputs respective metadata summaries, wherein each of the respective metadata summaries include one or more sub-trees structures, one or more attributes, and content text. The summary repository is coupled to receive and store the respective metadata summaries. The summary consolidator is coupled to the summary repository and is configured to delete duplicate metadata summaries from the summary repository.

Other embodiments of the present invention will be gleaned from a study of the following drawings and detailed description of the preferred embodiments.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1A is a block diagram of an exemplary posted document classification system in accordance with the present invention.

Fig. 1B illustrates a simplified block diagram of programming modules used in executing the method of the present invention.

Fig. 2A illustrates a XML/RDF metadata summary generated by the metadata parser module in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 2B illustrates a graphical mapping of the metadata summary shown in Fig. 2A in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 3 illustrates a method for classifying posted web pages in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 4 illustrates a method for selecting metadata summaries in accordance with the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Fig. 1A is a block diagram of an exemplary posted document classification system 100 in accordance with the present invention. The system 100 includes a document posting device 110 coupled to a computational device 150 via a communication link 130. In one embodiment, document posting device 110 may be an internet-accessible web server and the communication link 130 may be a hardwired or wireless TCP/IP internet connection. In an alternative embodiment, the posted document device 110 may be incorporated within the computational device 150 itself.

The computational device 150 includes a network interface connection 151, a CPU 152, an input/output device 153, such as a keyboard and monitor, and a main memory 154 for storing data and programming instructions. Other computer components such as a disk drive 155, configured to accept a magnetic floppy disk 157, and a direct access storage device (DASD) 156 for storing data and programming may also be included. Data and/or program instructions may be stored on the computer-readable medium 157, in which case the reader 155 reads and communicates the data and/or programming instructions to the main memory 154.

Fig. 1B illustrates a simplified block diagram of the main memory 154 in which programming modules reside for executing the method of the present invention. Included within main memory 154 is a web crawler module 160, a metadata parser module 165, a summary repository 170, a search engine module 175, and a summary consolidator module 180.

The web crawler module 160 searches and retrieves, via the network interface 151 and the communication link 130, electronically posted documents from posted document device 110. The retrieved documents may be stored in the main memory 154 or in the DASD 156. The metadata parser module 165 receives the downloaded documents and generates a metadata summary which is organized into one or more sub-tree structures in which attributes and/or text content is contained. An exemplary embodiment of a metadata summary is shown in Fig. 2A, further described below. The generated metadata summary is stored in the summary repository 170, which is preferably a database configured to store the generated metadata summaries. The summary repository 170 may reside partially or entirely within the main memory 154 or the DASD 156.

The search engine module 175 is in communication with the summary repository and preferably includes a document indexer/user interface operable to provide information contained within one or more of the stored metadata summaries in response to receiving the user's entry of specific keywords. In a specific embodiment, the search engine 175 may include any of the aforementioned commercially available search engines. In alternative embodiments, the search engine may be a specially designed search engine for indexing metadata summaries and retrieving information such as html links contained therein in response to the user's entry of specific keywords.

The summary consolidator module 180 is in communication with the summary repository and further includes sub-tree comparator 182, attribute comparator 184, and value comparator 186. As will be further described below, the summary consolidator module 180 selects metadata summaries from the summary repository 170, and compares them on a structural, attribute, and textual level to determine if the posted documents to which the compared summaries correspond are duplicates. If the metadata summaries are determined to be duplicates, the duplicate metadata summary is removed so that the summary repository 170 only stores distinct metadata summaries corresponding to distinct documents.

Fig. 2A illustrates one embodiment of a metadata summary 200 generated by the metadata parser module 165. The metadata summary 200 is illustrated in resource description framework (RDF), although other formats or languages, such as attribute-value pairs, as well as others may be used in alternative embodiments.

The metadata summary 200 includes three portions which summarize the data contained in its corresponding web page: a data gatherer portion 210, a metadata portion 220, and a datasource portion 230. The data gatherer portion 210 includes information about the data gatherer, such as the assigned title of the data gatherer and date of gathering. The metadata portion 220 includes information about the web page source, such as the date of web page update and the document's mime-type. The datasource portion 230 includes information about the web page data itself, or the metadata proper. This portion may include information such as the web page's title, abstract, presentation format, encoding, textual content, applets, scripts, embedded images and other multimedia, information about out-links and/or in-links, as well as other metadata.

In the illustrated embodiment of Fig. 2A, the datasource portion 230 includes three attributes 231, 232, and 233 and two sub-parts (sub-trees) 234 and 236. Attribute 231 includes an attribute

name: "html-title," and an attribute value: "Jane's Homepage." Attributes 232 and 233 list additional attribute names and corresponding values, respectively.

Attribute names, attribute values, and text content are stored within "bags" and "list items" nested within sub-tree structures 234 and 236. As known in the art, the terms "Bag," "LI," and "Description" are RDF structural constructs which the summary consolidator module 180 recognizes in the document grouping process, further described below.

In the illustrated embodiment, the sub-tree 234 includes a "bag" (rdf:Bag) in which a first "list item" (rdf:LI) contains a first ref attribute 234a and a first ref annotation 234b. The "bag" also includes a second "list item" (rdf:LI) containing a second ref attribute 234c and a ref annotation 234d. As known in the art, the ref attributes 234a and 234c indicate the destination of the HTML link (out-link) when activated. The annotation attributes 234b and 234d give the text associated with the out-link. In the illustrated embodiment, the first ref attribute 234a has a value of "http://www.yahoo.com/," and the second ref attribute 234c has a value of "http://www.people.com/jane_doe/my_photo.jpg." The first ref annotation 234b has a value of "Yahoo!" and the second ref annotation 234d has a value of "picture of me." Of course, additional ref attributes and annotations may be used having similar as well as different values in alternative embodiments.

Sub-tree 236 defines a presentation description attribute. As known in the art, the presentation description contains textual content of the HTML page viewable through a world wide web browser. In the illustrated embodiment, the sub-tree 236 includes a "bag" (rdf:Bag) having a first "list item" (rdf:LI) containing the textual content: "Welcome to my homepage. " The "bag" also includes a second "list item" containing the textual content "Use Yahoo! to search for something or look at a picture of me."

Fig. 2B represents a graphical mapping of the metadata summary 200. The data gather portion 210 and the metadata portion 220 are included under a first RDF description node which includes attributes as shown in the summary 200. A second RDF description node defines the datasource portion 230 and includes metadata attributes 231, 232, and 233, as well as metadata sub-trees 234 and 236. Metadata sub-tree 234 (ref-annotations) includes several nodes; specifically, an RDF "bag" (rdf:Bag) which includes two RDF "list items" (rdf:LI), each including an RDF "description" (rdf:Description). Each RDF "description" has two attributes named "ref" and

"annotation." The metadata subtree 236 (presentation text) also includes several nodes; particularly an RDF "bag" node which itself includes two RDF "list item" nodes, each of which include text content. As will be further explained below, by comparing the structures of the metadata summaries, and in particular, the sub-structures of their metadata portions, summaries can be classified faster.

Fig. 3 illustrates a method for classifying documents, such as posted web pages, in accordance with the present invention. Initially at 302, posted documents are retrieved by the system. This process is preferably performed using the web crawler module described above. Next at 304, the metadata parser module reads the downloaded document and generates a metadata summary which summarizes the web page's content and structure as depicted in Fig. 2A. The metadata summary is stored in the summary repository until accessed by the search engine module, as described above. The web crawler may follow links such as hypertext links associated with web pages or other documents as it circulates through the collection of posted documents.

At 306, the metadata summaries are collected into x different summary groups, each summary group containing summaries having a particular attribute-type. In the illustrated embodiment, summaries having the same mime-type are grouped. In this embodiment, a first summary group labeled F may include n summaries of .gif files (f_1, f_2, f_3, ... f_n), .txt file summaries may be placed into a second summary group, html file summaries placed into a third summary group, and Java file summaries placed into a fourth summary group. Of course, metadata summaries corresponding to other mime-type files may also be received and grouped as well.

Those of skill in the art will appreciate that other file attributes may be used as the grouping criteria either alternatively or in addition to the file mime-type. For instance, the document's content-length may be used as a grouping criteria either independently or in combination with the document's mime-type. Other file attributes may be used as a grouping criteria as well.

Next at 310, an equivalence metadata table (EMT) is generated for each summary group to record the equivalence state between compared metadata summaries. In a preferred embodiment in which a summary group includes f_n metadata summaries, the EMT is a two-dimensional matrix of f_n rows by f_n columns, each off-diagonal entry indicating the equivalence state between the corresponding rows and columns. In the preferred embodiment, a 0 is entered if the two intersecting metadata summaries are found to be distinct, and a 1 is entered if the two summaries are found to be duplicative, as further described below.

At 315, a summary group is chosen and two summaries contained therein are selected for comparison. By grouping similar mime-type files, unnecessary file comparisons, e.g., comparisons between .txt and .gif files are avoided, thereby accelerating the classification process. An embodiment of this process is further illustrated in Fig. 4.

At 320, the sub-tree structures of the selected metadata summaries are compared. As explained above, each metadata summary includes a metadata portion 230 (Fig. 2) having one or more sub-tree structures, each sub-tree having one or more nodes. In the preferred embodiment, the structural comparison process includes comparing the sub-tree structures of the metadata portion to determine equivalence. In an alternative embodiment, one or more sub-tree structures external to the metadata portion are compared either alternatively, or in addition to, the metadata portion sub-trees.

At 325, a determination is made as to whether the structures of the compared sub-trees are equivalent. If not, the first and second metadata summaries and their corresponding documents (web pages) are identified as distinct. This process is performed in one embodiment by entering a 0 into the aforementioned equivalence metadata table at the appropriate entry location. Both metadata summaries are subsequently returned to the summary group and the classification process continues at 320 where a subsequent comparison is initiated. By comparing the metadata summaries initially on a structural level, the time needed to classify documents as distinct is significantly reduced compared to the conventional textual comparison process.

If the structures of the first and second summary sub-trees are determined to be equivalent, the process continues at 335, where the attribute values within the metadata portion sub-tree are compared. The attribute value comparison process may include locating the attribute title within the appropriate sub-tree and storing its corresponding attribute value. The stored attribute values are subsequently compared and their equivalence determined at 340. If the attribute values are not equivalent, the first and second metadata summaries and their corresponding documents are identified as distinct. This process is performed in one embodiment by entering a 0 into the aforementioned equivalence metadata table at the appropriate entry location. Both metadata summaries are subsequently returned to the summary group.

If the compared attribute values are equivalent, the process continues at 345, where the text located within the selected sub-tree structures is compared. The text comparison process may include locating and storing text and comparing the stored text of the two selected summaries. As

can be seen, the attribute and text comparison process in the present invention is performed only over a portion of the total text of the document, greatly reducing the amount of time needed to compare the documents. The process at 320, 335 and 345 are preferably executed using the above-described summary consolidator module 180 shown in Fig. 1B. In particular, sub-tree comparator 182, attribute comparator 184, and text comparator 186 may be used to perform the processes of 320, 335, and 345, respectively.

If the text comparison process indicates that the documents contain identical text, the two metadata summaries and their corresponding web pages are identified as duplicates. This process is performed in one embodiment by entering a 1 into the aforementioned equivalence metadata table at the appropriate entry location. In one embodiment, one of the duplicative metadata summaries is removed and the summary group consolidated. A log which indicates some of the removed summary's attributes (such as the URL, date, etc.) may be made.

The aforementioned steps are repeated until each of the metadata summaries in all of the summary groups are compared and their equivalence states are entered into the corresponding EMT. At the conclusion of the process, a set of EMTs store data which indicate the equivalence states of the retrieved documents. In addition, the summary repository is consolidated into an "ordered summary repository" which stores only those metadata summaries corresponding to content-unique documents.

The process illustrated in Fig. 3 may be repeated to retrieve and compare newly downloaded documents. For instance, a new document may be downloaded and subsequently placed into a summary group of the same mime-type. The comparison process is subsequently performed and an EMT is generated

The ordered metadata repository and the EMTs may be used in a variety of ways to obtain useful information about the summarized documents. In one embodiment, the ordered metadata repository may be used as a search engine source from which content-unique documents are produced in response to entered keywords. In another embodiment, the EMTs may be accessed to show all of the documents which contain the same text as a qualifying search result entry. In another embodiment, the search engine may query the user for additional selection criteria, such as the desired date, or URL in order to choose between two identified duplicative documents.

Fig. 4 illustrates one embodiment of the processes shown in 315 for selecting metadata summaries in accordance with the present invention. Initially at 315a similar mime-type files are ordered within the group as described above. For instance, F includes n metadata summaries $\{f_1, f_2, f_3,.. f_n\}$ received in the repository which are summaries of .txt files. Other mime-type groups may also be included.

At 315b, one of the m^{th} groups, for instance the F group, is selected for comparison. Next at 315c, a reference summary f_i is selected and the summary's sub-tree is mapped. During the first iteration of the process, i=1 and the first metadata summary is selected and sub-graphed as the reference summary against which the remaining summaries will be compared.

Next at 315d a secondary summary f_j, is selected and its sub-tree is mapped. In the preferred embodiment, j>i, i.e., during the first iteration, the second metadata summary of the group is selected and its sub-tree structure mapped. Subsequently, the reference and secondary summaries f_i and f_j are compared as described above in steps 320-360.

Once the comparison has been performed, a determination at 315e is made as to whether j is equal to n, i.e., whether the last summary within the selected group has been compared to the reference summary f_i. If not, j is incremented at 315f and the process returns to 315d where the next summary within the same group is selected and sub-tree structure compared to primary summary f_i. If j=n indicating that all of the i-1 summaries have been compared to f_i, the process continues at 315g where a determination is made as to whether i=n-1.

If at 315g, a determination is made that I is not equal to n-1, the process continues at 315h where I is incremented, thereby selecting the next file as the reference file to which all of the subsequent files will be compared. If at 315g, n is determined to be equal to i-1, then all of the summaries have been compared against each other and a different group may be selected. At 315i, a determination is made as to whether the group index m is equal to the x, indicating the last group. If not, the group index m is incremented at 315k and the process continues at 315b. If m=x, all of the groups have been compared and the classification process is complete.

The present invention has now been described in terms of the exemplary embodiments. Those of skill in the art will appreciate that various modifications and alterations may be made while still remaining within the present invention, the scope of which is legally defined as the metes and boundaries of the following claims:

CLAIMS

WE CLAIM:

1. A method for classifying electronically posted documents, the method comprising:

receiving a first document and a second document;

generating a first metadata summary corresponding to said first document and a second metadata summary corresponding to the second document, wherein the first metadata summary includes a first summary sub-tree and the second metadata summary includes a second summary sub-tree;

comparing the structure of the first summary sub-tree with the structure of the second summary sub-tree; and

identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the structures of the first and second summary sub-trees are not equivalent.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the first summary sub-tree includes at least one attribute having a first attribute value, and wherein the second summary sub-tree includes at least one attribute having a second attribute value, the method further comprising:

comparing, for each of the at least one attributes, the first and second attribute values; and

identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the attribute values of the first and second summary sub-trees are not equivalent.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the first summary sub-tree includes text content, and wherein the second summary sub-tree includes text content, the method further comprising:

comparing the text content included within the first and second summary sub-trees; and

identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the text content of the first and second summary sub-trees are not equivalent.

4. The method of claim 2, wherein the first summary sub-tree further includes text content, and wherein the second summary sub-tree includes text content, the method further comprising:

comparing the text content included within the first and second summary sub-trees; and

identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the text content included within the first and second summary sub-trees are not equivalent.

5. The method of claim 4, further comprising identifying the first and second documents as duplicates if the text content within the first and second summary sub-trees are equivalent.

6. The method of claim 5, further comprising removing the second metadata summary from the first summary group if the structures of the first and second summary sub-trees are equivalent and if the first summary value is equivalent to the second summary value for each of the at least one attributes.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

defining a first equivalence metadata table comprising:

a first row corresponding to the first metadata summary;

a second row corresponding to the second metadata summary;

a first column corresponding to the first metadata summary; and

a second column corresponding to the second metadata summary, wherein the process of identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the structures of the first and second summary sub-trees are not equivalent comprises storing a zero binary value in the first row and second column position of the equivalence metadata summary.

8. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

defining a first equivalence metadata table comprising:

a first row corresponding to the first metadata summary;

a second row corresponding to the second metadata summary;

a first column corresponding to the first metadata summary; and

a second column corresponding to the second metadata summary, wherein the process of identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the attribute values of the first and second summary sub-trees are not equivalent comprises storing a zero binary value in the first row and second column position of the equivalence metadata summary.

9. The method of claim 3, further comprising:

defining a first equivalence metadata table comprising:

a first row corresponding to the first metadata summary;

a second row corresponding to the second metadata summary;

a first column corresponding to the first metadata summary; and

a second column corresponding to the second metadata summary, wherein the process of identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the text content of the first and second summary sub-trees are not equivalent comprises storing a zero binary value in the first row and second column position of the equivalence metadata summary.

10. A method for classifying electronically posted documents, the method comprising:

receiving a plurality of documents;

generating a respective plurality of metadata summaries corresponding to the plurality of received documents;

grouping a first subset of the respective plurality of metadata summaries into a first summary group, the first summary group comprising summaries having a first mime-type designation;

selecting a first metadata summary and a second metadata summary from the first summary group, wherein the first metadata summary includes a first summary sub-tree and the second metadata summary includes a second summary sub-tree;

comparing the structure of the first summary sub-tree with the structure of the second summary sub-tree; and

identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the structures of the first and second summary sub-trees are not equivalent.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein grouping further comprises grouping a second subset of the respective metadata summaries into a second summary group, the second summary group comprising summaries having a second mime-type designation.

12. A system for classifying electronically posted documents, the system comprising:

a metadata parser module coupled to receive electronically posted documents, the metadata parser configured to output respective metadata summaries, wherein each respective metadata summary comprises one or more sub-trees structures, one or more attributes, and content text;

a summary repository coupled to receive and store the respective metadata summaries; and

a summary consolidator coupled to the summary repository, the summary consolidator configured to delete duplicate metadata summaries from the summary repository.

13. The system of claim 12, wherein the summary consolidator comprises:

a sub-tree comparator configured to compare one or more sub-tree structures of the retrieved metadata summaries;

an attribute comparator configured to compare the attribute values of the retrieved metadata summaries; and

a text comparator configured to compare the text content included within the retrieved metadata summaries.

14. The system of claim 13, wherein the sub-tree comparator is configured to compare the metadata portion of the metadata summary.

15. The system of claim 13, wherein the attribute comparator is configured to compare the attribute values included within the metadata portion of the metadata summary.

16. The system of claim 13, wherein the text comparator is configured to compare the text content included within the metadata portion of the metadata summary.

17. A program product for use in a computer system that executes program steps recorded in a computer-readable media to perform a method for classifying electronically posted documents, the program product comprising:

a recordable media;

a program of computer-readable instructions executable by the computer system to perform processes comprising:

receiving a first document and a second document;

generating a first metadata summary corresponding to said first document and a second metadata summary corresponding to the second document, wherein the first metadata summary includes a first summary sub-tree and the second metadata summary includes a second summary sub-tree;

comparing the structure of the first summary sub-tree with the structure of the second summary sub-tree; and

identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the structures of the first and second summary sub-trees are not equivalent.

18. The program product of claim 17, wherein the first summary sub-tree includes at least one attribute having a first attribute value, and wherein the second summary sub-tree includes at least one attribute having a second attribute value, the program product method further comprising the processes of:

comparing, for each of the at least one attributes, the first and second attribute values; and

identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the attribute values of the first and second summary sub-trees are not equivalent.

19. The program product of claim 18, wherein the first summary sub-tree includes text content, and wherein the second summary sub-tree includes text content, the program product further comprising the processes of:

comparing the text content included within the first and second summary sub-trees; and

identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the text content of the first and second summary sub-trees are not equivalent..

20. The program product of claim 19, further comprising the method step of identifying the first and second documents as duplicates if the text content within the first and second summary sub-trees are equivalent.

21. The program product of claim 20, further comprising the process of removing the second metadata summary from the first summary group.

22. The program product of claim 21, further comprising the processes of:

defining a first equivalence metadata table comprising:

a first row corresponding to the first metadata summary;

a second row corresponding to the second metadata summary;

a first column corresponding to the first metadata summary; and

a second column corresponding to the second metadata summary, wherein the process of identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the text content of the first and second summary sub-trees are not equivalent comprises storing a zero binary value in the first row and second column position of the equivalence metadata summary.

23. The method of claim 18, further comprising the processes of:

defining a first equivalence metadata table comprising:

a first row corresponding to the first metadata summary;

a second row corresponding to the second metadata summary;

a first column corresponding to the first metadata summary; and

a second column corresponding to the second metadata summary, wherein the process of identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the attribute values of the first and second summary sub-trees are not equivalent comprises storing a zero binary value in the first row and second column position of the equivalence metadata summary.

24. The method of claim 19, further comprising the processes of:

defining a first equivalence metadata table comprising:

a first row corresponding to the first metadata summary;

a second row corresponding to the second metadata summary;

a first column corresponding to the first metadata summary; and

a second column corresponding to the second metadata summary, wherein the process of identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the text content of the first and second summary sub-trees are not equivalent comprises storing a zero binary value in the first row and second column position of the equivalence metadata summary.

25. A program product for use in a computer system that executes program steps recorded in a computer-readable media to perform a method for classifying electronically posted documents, the program product comprising:

a recordable media;

a program of computer-readable instructions executable by the computer system to perform method steps comprising:

receiving a plurality of documents;

generating a respective plurality of metadata summaries corresponding to the plurality of received documents;

grouping a first subset of the respective plurality of metadata summaries into a first summary group, the first summary group comprising summaries having a first mime-type designation;

selecting a first metadata summary and a second metadata summary from the first summary group, wherein the first metadata summary includes a first summary sub-tree and the second metadata summary includes a second summary sub-tree;

comparing the structure of the first summary sub-tree with the structure of the second summary sub-tree; and

identifying the first and second documents as distinct if the structures of the first and second summary sub-trees are not equivalent.

26. The program product of claim 25, wherein the step of grouping further comprises the step of grouping a second subset of the respective metadata summaries into a second summary group, the second summary group comprising summaries having a second mime-type designation.

SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR CLASSIFYING ELECTRONICALLY POSTED DOCUMENTS

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method for classifying electronically posted documents includes receiving two posted documents and generating corresponding metadata summaries for each, wherein each of the metadata summaries includes at least one sub-tree structure. The structures of the two summary sub-trees within the respective metadata summaries are subsequently compared. If the two summary sub-trees are different, the two documents are deemed distinct. If the two summary sub-trees are the same, attribute values and text content of the metadata summaries are compared over a portion of the metadata summaries. If the compared attribute values and text content are determined to be the same, the documents are deemed duplicative.

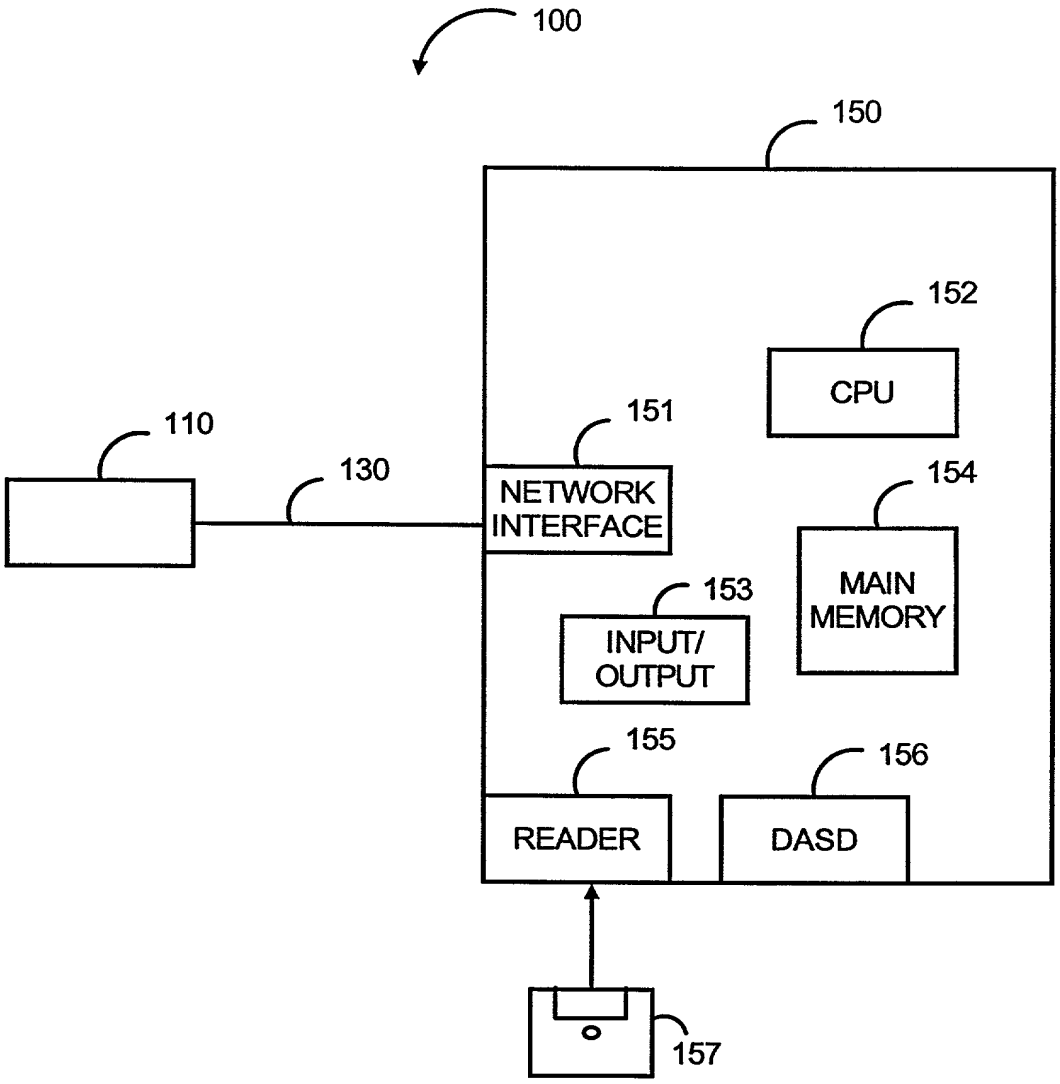
100
150
152
CPU
110
151
130
NETWORK INTERFACE
154
MAIN MEMORY
153
INPUT/ OUTPUT
155
156
READER
DASD
157

FIG. 1A

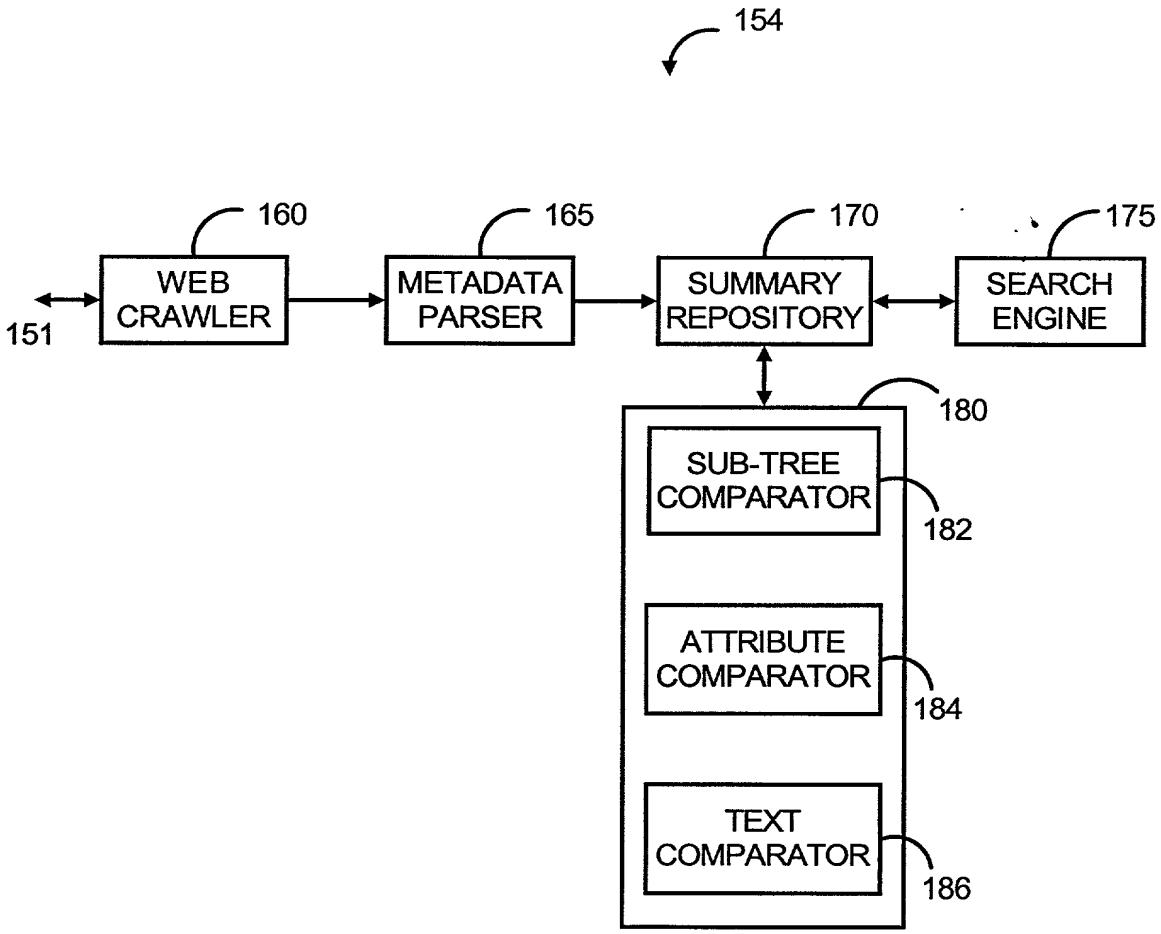
154
160
165
170
175
WEB CRAWLER
METADATA PARSER
SUMMARY REPOSITORY
SEARCH ENGINE
151
180
SUB-TREE COMPARATOR
182
ATTRIBUTE COMPARATOR
184
TEXT COMPARATOR
186

FIG. 1B

FIGURE 2A

```
<?xml version="1.0"?>
<rdf:RDF xmlns:rdf="http://www.w3.org/schemas/rdf-schema">
        <!--
                This RDF Description contains information about (1) the data gatherer and
                (2) the metadata of the data source.
        -->
        <rdf:Description  gatherer="Grand Central Station Gatherer II"
                          gathered-on="Tue Mar 23 17:38:40 GMT 1999"
                          summarizer="com.ibm.almaden.gcs.summarizer.HTMLSummaryMaker"

                          resource="http://www.people.com/jane_doe/homepage.html"
                          source-last-modified="Tue Feb 17 15:43:58 GMT 1999"
                          mime-type="http/html"
                          content-length="46220"
                          source-is="Good"
                          comments="good"/>
        <!--
                This RDF Description contains information about from the data source itself.
                In addition to textual information, it contains structural information, for example
                the URLs that the page points to.
        -->
        <rdf:Description  html-title="Jane's Homepage"
                          html-encoding="8859_1"
                          abstract="Personal homepage of Jane Doe">
                <!--
                        The "ref-annotations" contains summaries of the out-links of the HTML
                        page. In this case, the attribute "ref" gives the URL of the referenced
                        page. The attribute "annotation" gives the text associated with each
                        out-link.
                -->
                <ref-annotations>
                        <rdf:Bag>
                                <rdf:LI>
                                        <rdf:Description
                                                ref="http://www.yahoo.com/"
                                                annotation="Yahoo!"/>
                                </rdf:LI>
                                <rdf:LI>
                                        <rdf:Description
                                                ref="http://www.people.com/jane_doe/my_photo.jpg"
                                                annotation="picture of me."/>
                                </rdf:LI>
                        </rdf:Bag>
                </ref-annotations>
                <!--
                        The "presentation-text" contains the textual content of the HTML page
                        that may be seen through a WWW browser.
                -->
                <presentation-text>
                        <rdf:Bag>
                                <rdf:LI>Welcome to my homepage. </rdf:LI>
                                <rdf:LI>Use Yahoo! to search for something or look
                                        at a picture of me.</rdf:LI>
                        </rdf:Bag>
                </presentation-text>
        </rdf:Description>
</rdf:RDF>
```

210 220 230 234 236 231 232 233 234a 234b 234c 234d

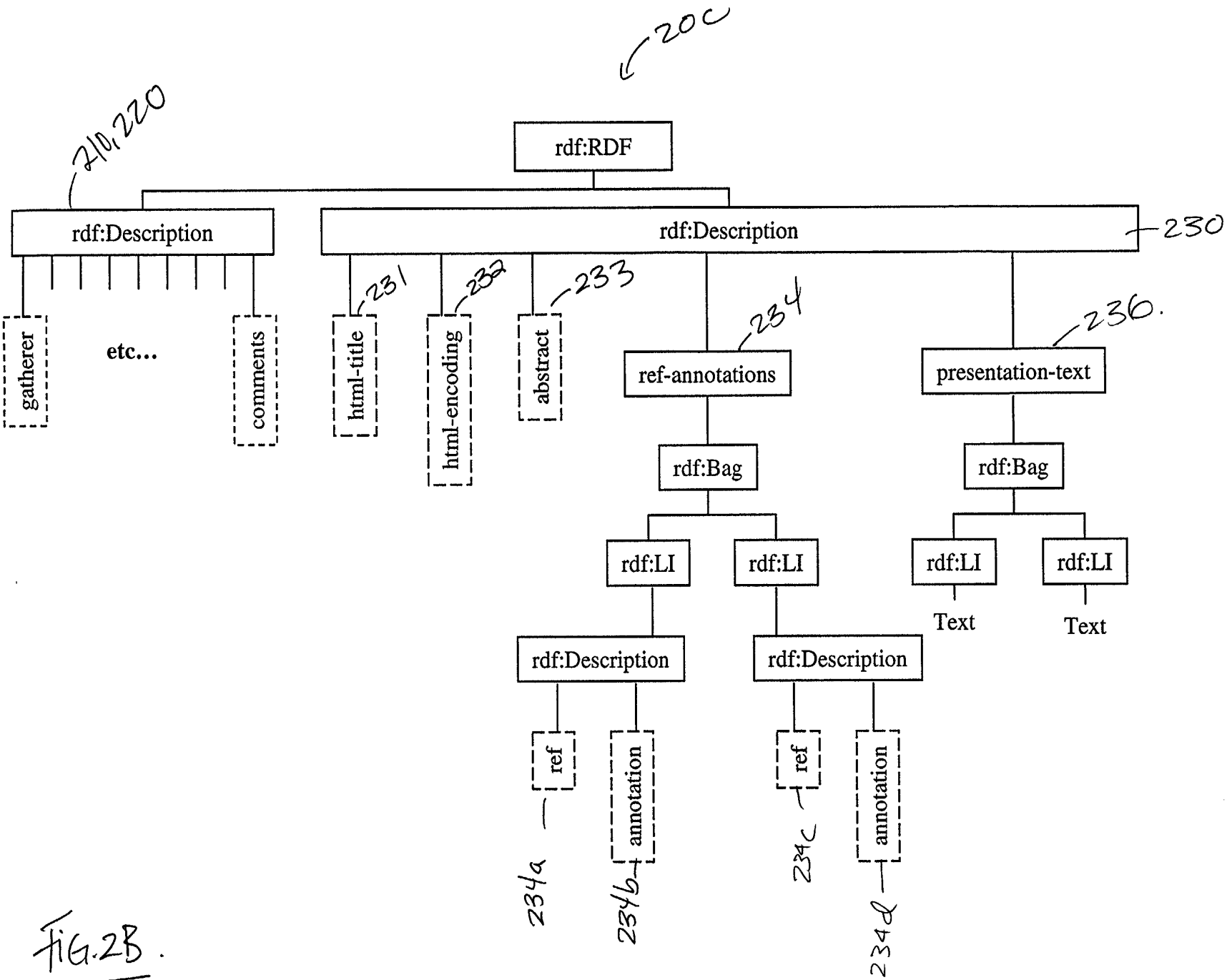
20C
210,220
rdf:RDF
rdf:Description
rdf:Description
230
gatherer
etc...
comments
231
html-title
232
html-encoding
233
abstract
234
ref-annotations
236.
presentation-text
rdf:Bag
rdf:Bag
rdf:LI
rdf:LI
rdf:LI
rdf:LI
Text
Text
rdf:Description
rdf:Description
ref
annotation
ref
annotation
234a
234b
234c
234d

FIG.2B.

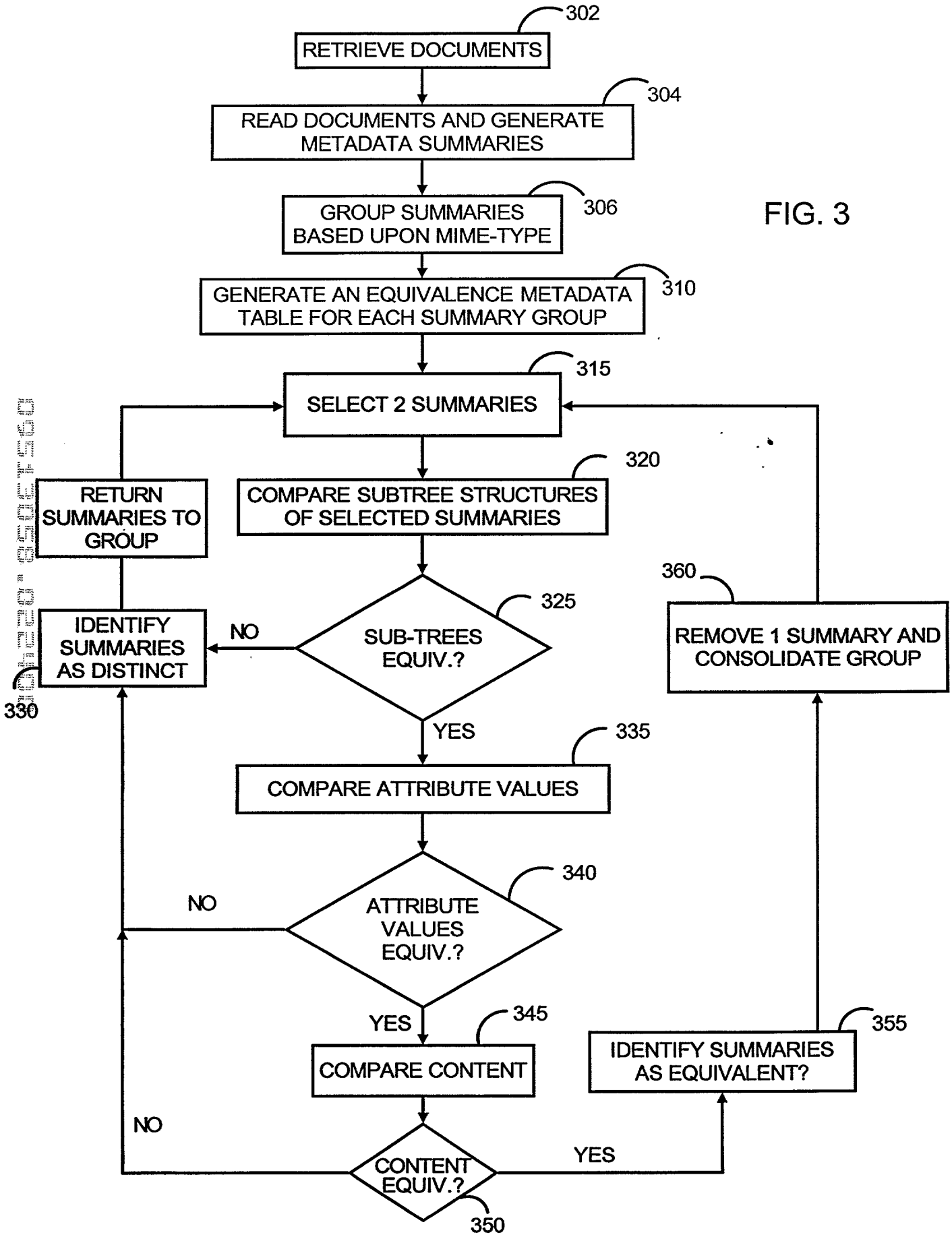
302
RETRIEVE DOCUMENTS
304
READ DOCUMENTS AND GENERATE METADATA SUMMARIES
306
GROUP SUMMARIES BASED UPON MIME-TYPE
310
GENERATE AN EQUIVALENCE METADATA TABLE FOR EACH SUMMARY GROUP
315
SELECT 2 SUMMARIES
320
COMPARE SUBTREE STRUCTURES OF SELECTED SUMMARIES
325
SUB-TREES EQUIV.?
NO
YES
RETURN SUMMARIES TO GROUP
IDENTIFY SUMMARIES AS DISTINCT
330
335
COMPARE ATTRIBUTE VALUES
340
ATTRIBUTE VALUES EQUIV.?
NO
YES
345
COMPARE CONTENT
NO
CONTENT EQUIV.?
350
YES
355
IDENTIFY SUMMARIES AS EQUIVALENT?
360
REMOVE 1 SUMMARY AND CONSOLIDATE GROUP

FIG. 3

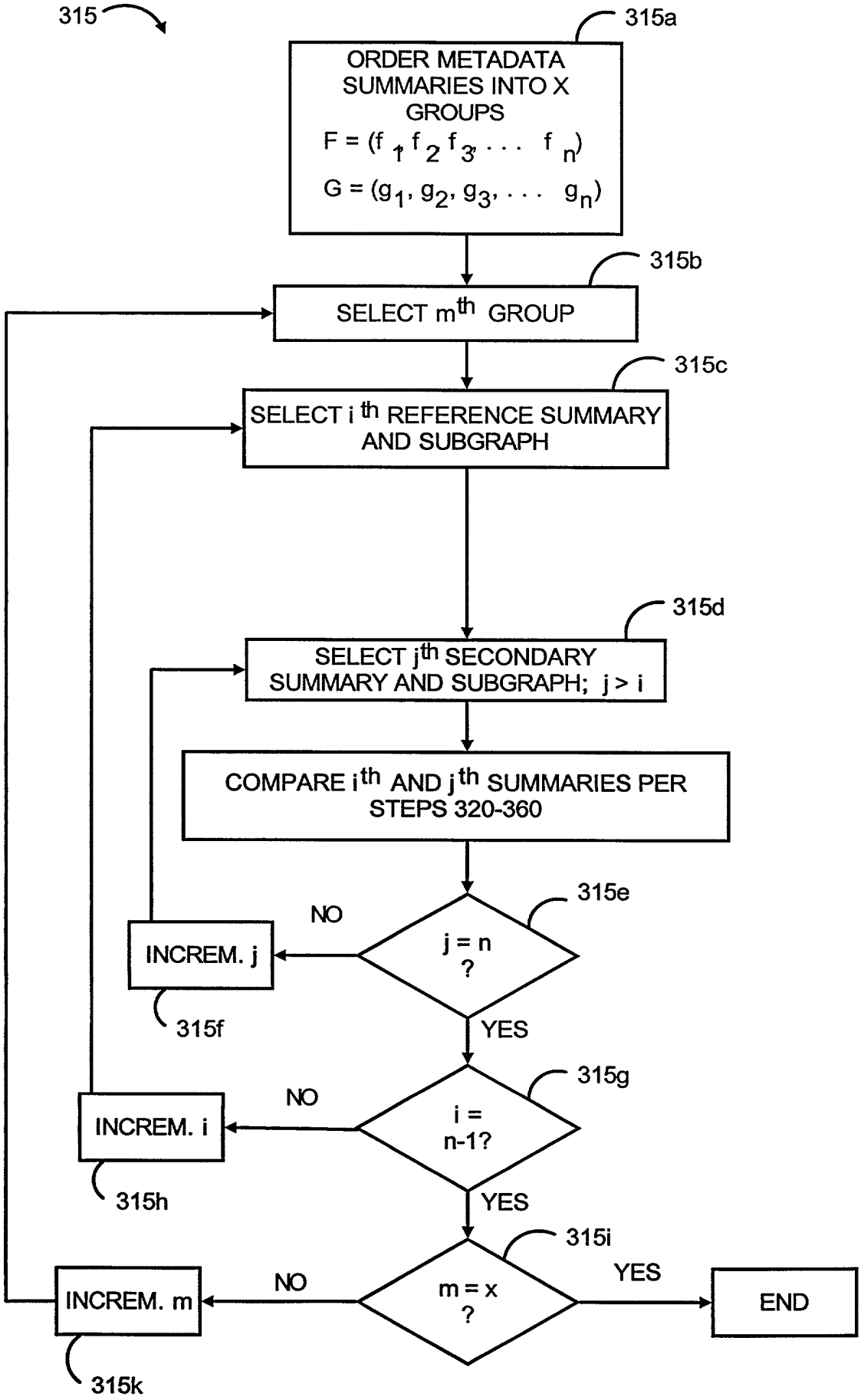
315
315a
ORDER METADATA SUMMARIES INTO X GROUPS
F = (f 1 f 2 f 3, . . . f n)
G = (g1, g2, g3, . . . gn)
315b
SELECT m th GROUP
315c
SELECT i th REFERENCE SUMMARY AND SUBGRAPH
315d
SELECT j th SECONDARY SUMMARY AND SUBGRAPH; j > i
COMPARE i th AND j th SUMMARIES PER STEPS 320-360
315e
j = n ?
NO
INCREM. j
315f
YES
315g
i = n-1?
NO
INCREM. i
315h
YES
315i
m = x ?
NO
INCREM. m
315k
YES
END

FIG. 4

DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR PATENT APPLICATION

DOCKET: AM999074

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name;

I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled:

SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR CLASSIFYING ELECTRONICALLY POSTED DOCUMENTS

the specification of which (check one)

_X_ is attached hereto
___ was filed on _____
as Application Serial No. _____
and was amended on _____ (if applicable).

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56.

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, §119 of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed:

Prior Foreign Application(s)			Priority Claimed
None			
(Number)	(Country)	(Date/Month/Year Filed)	___ Yes ___ No

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, §120 of any United States application(s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, §112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56 which occurred between filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application.

None		
(Application Serial No.)	(Filing Date)	(Status) (patented, pending, abandoned)

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

POWER OF ATTORNEY:

As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following attorney(s) and/or agent(s) to prosecute this application and transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith. (list name and registration number)

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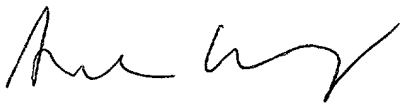
Inventor's signature:  Date: 02/09/2000

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